

HALLMARKS

FALL 1999



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Art by:

Evins Cameron
Alice Orman
Corinne Mynatt
Leah High
Neel Webb
Laura Callaway

Snapping Back

Being sucked into the dark illusions of night
I pushed forward on the gravel road
The pulsing of the night crickets resounded
Over and over my mind stretched, snapping back again
A voice before me broke into the song I once knew
But had long lost inside myself
Mechanically, I placed one foot in front
The crickets had overcome me
A sharp breath and the other swung outward
Though I felt nothing
I thought hard about what lay behind me
But dared not turn my head
Determined to survive on the endless stretch
My body carried itself unevenly
Through the gravel path set before it
I feared the glassy puddles
Left by the previous night's sadness
It wept for my journey and the blindness
In which I sought life
The throbbing of the crickets mocked my confusion
And the sightless road provoked desperation
Every fear and peace swept over me, becoming one
I continued to walk through the deafening quiet
A flickering light began to play across the trees
At my side then over and beyond me
Staring hard through the caged abyss
I recognized the light

Mary Diane Bartoe (10)

Unreachable

Sara is crying. I try to talk to her, but she hears without listening. And that does me no good now. I stand no more than two feet away from her, yet we are not even in the same world. She is still. Her golden hair loosely falls on her burdened shoulders. Underneath is a long, red, wool sweater that she has bought for this night. How I wish life would never change! If we could only have stayed the same. But I guess that is impossible. Because even if my life never changed, hers would. It changed long ago without telling me. Or maybe I just never knew who she really was to begin with.

How deceitful the heart is. I can hear hers pounding. Its murmur echoes the walls and fills the empty silence that separates us. I reach my hand out for her to grasp, but she does not move. The soul we once shared has died in this cold, small, dim room. Soon, I will walk out the back door and travel across the yards into my safe home. And she, too, will leave and vanish in the darkness.

I know that this moment... this very moment, no clock chimes. No mothers whisper, no lovers kiss, and not one breath is taken. I can do nothing but sit and try to understand. I do not know of true pain. But I guessed that her face had felt it before. It almost looked as if she knew that this would happen. We both knew. Just one of us cares now. That person is sitting across from me. Too far to reach.

Mary Cresap Szarwark (11)



Evins Cameron (11)

Visitor

"Hang on a minute- I'm coming!" I made my way past piles of clothing, books and other countless items packed into the three rooms of my apartment. I pushed a few rebellious locks of hair out of my eyes and opened the door. There in front of me was a face identical to my own, but it possessed something else too. It had been battered by wind, by sun, by life.

"Jenna. May I come in?" the lone figure asked.

I nodded dumbly, shoving some boxes away from the threshold in order to fully open the door. She strolled inside, and plunked herself down upon the pile of pillows and quilts that sufficed for a couch. Gingerly, I arranged myself cross-legged, careful not to be too close to her. For several minutes, we sat there silently, neither of us speaking, just avoiding one another's eyes.

My voice eventually found words, feeble though they were.

"What finally brings you to Boston?"

My eyes flicked away involuntarily as I muttered, "It's been long enough."

"Well you know how I love big cities at Christmas. Such a nice, giving spirit. And I thought to myself, which city's my favorite? Well it took me only a moment to choose Boston. Just thought I'd stop by to see you."

She was interrupted by the telephone's shrill ring. I jumped at this temporary escape and dashed into the next room.

"Oh, hey Luke!" I glanced back into the front room to see the figure leaning forward, trying to see me, and lowered my voice. "Look honey, Mother's here... tell me about it... yeah, I'll call if I need you. Bye!"

I walked back toward Mother, braced to confront the question that I knew awaited. Sure enough I found her eyes driving into me like knives from beneath thin, dark pencilled brows. "Who's Luke?" She pronounced the name with infinite distaste, as one might speak of a parasite.

"Luke is a good friend of mine." I spoke carefully, lightly, as if he were of no consequence whatsoever.

"Humph. That's what you call him? 'A good friend?'" She rolled her eyes and abruptly noticed the room in which she sat.

Her eyes widened in astonishment at the scattered sketches that littered the small apartment. "This is what you're doing? Drawing?" She stood slowly. Her joints creaked pitifully, and she swayed precariously once upright. I made no move toward her.

Mother wandered around the room, shocked. She inquired gruffly about my sketches. "Who's this fella?" She held up a large

paper.

I looked up into his beautiful clear face. I remembered that moment with fierce clarity. Life reached at him from many directions, long fingers seeking to grasp him, haul him down a path. It wanted him and he resisted, unsure of himself and his future. But when I met him, his deep mind concentrated on a magazine, trying to ignore that vortex of sorrows that I read on his face--but knew nothing about--until later.

"That's
She nodded,
trundled over to
papers. "What
Who's that?"

I an-
"She's an or-
the street
can remem-
tossed the
me as she
heavy paper
the sea of hard-
my toe stopped
young girl's
gazed up at me
trust and hope.
refuse eyes like
Silent tears slid
quickly, like wa-
overflowing

I was
that I had spoken aloud. My mother's shuffling ceased and her eyes softened. But their sorrow wasn't for me. She was nowhere near my Boston apartment.

"She'll never understand how she got there, or why. Who-
ever put her there will never get over it either."

She shot me a fleeting glance before moving on. My eyes were trained on her, waiting for something, *anything*, she might tell me--about her, about myself. My heart leapt into my throat, but Mother turned on her heel, holding another sketch.

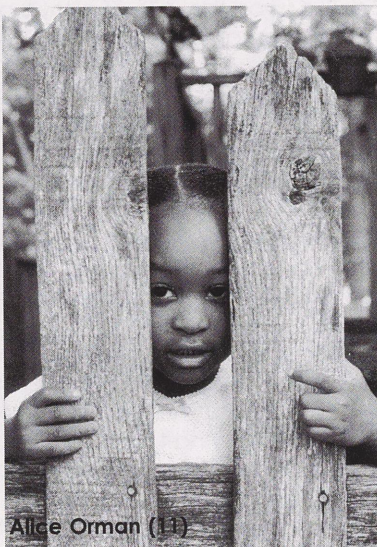
"Isn't this the same little girl?"

"Yes, Mother." Sadness roughened my voice.

Luke."
satisfied, and
another stack of
about this one?

swered softly,
phan. Been on
longer than she
ber." Mother
drawing toward
moved on. The
skimmed along
wood floors until
its journey. The
enormous eyes
with tremendous
"How could you
that?" I muttered.
down my cheeks
ter out of an
gutter.

abruptly aware



"So is this her new home?" Mother's eyes filled with hope. I viewed her as a young child, asking to be assured that the story would end "happily ever after."

I hated myself then. Now I knew how adults felt when they had to inform their innocent child that Santa Claus wasn't real. I had created a lie in my drawing, where I hoped to portray the true colors of this world in which we were living.

"No Mother, I never saw her again. I even looked around orphanages and asked policemen. No one knew or cared. There's never been a lot of interest in lost souls has there?"

"I'm telling you Jenna, there's always someone who cares. You cannot imagine what it's like for those people to have to give them up. The girl can't live with her. Can't live without her. Awful as that may sound, it's true. That girl may have been better off on the streets than in her mother's arms. What if that mother was abusive or crazy or something? No one would care about her. Not as much as you did."

At my sudden glance, Mother nodded. "Your soul is so kind. I didn't raise you, but I know you--perhaps better than you'll ever know yourself. Your artwork tells so much of your very being. It's good, you know. I'm proud of you." Mother paused, embarrassed at having said so much. She persisted at her point. "Have you never thought of that? That maybe her mother helped her by leaving?" Mother's eyes pleaded with me.

And unexpectedly, I saw Mother--*really* saw her. Until now, I had not noticed her gaunt cheekbones. Despite her heavy clothing, Mother's figure was small, delicate. Narrow shoulders. Thin, tangled hair. Deep eyes, pools of endured sorrows. She had saved me from twenty-five years of sharing those same pools of sorrow in leaving me on my own. Now I wanted so much to cast a bright reflection in those pools. I wished to fling stardust into their depths, to illuminate them. I nodded slowly and smiled. Immediately, a tangible warmth flooded the room.

Tiny stars filled her eyes and shot down her cheeks. Mother pulled me to her, clasping me tightly.

Laura Lee (9)



Evins Cameron (11)

The Fool's Race

There once was a race,
 Of many fools,
 To see who was in,
 To see who was cool.
 Great was the cost,
 For the people,
 Who lost.
 But the so-called winners,
 Who were so wise,
 Could never stop running,
 For their so-called prize.
 So I vowed to stop running,
 To take a new pace,
 And stop judging people,
 By who won the race.

Mary Cresap Szarwark (11)

Aida

When Aida forgets what she came for, leans against the worn bar, and twirls her hair, the cowboys notice her.

"Dance with me," they say, and she does.

Aida doesn't think when dancing with cowboys. She doesn't need to. She just shuts her heart and smiles a lazy, shallow smile. Aida doesn't pay attention to her steps and the cowboy of the moment. She concentrates on the movement, the feeling of being rushed around the floor to the mariachi beat of the tired Texas band that's been around as long as anyone can remember.

Aida listens to the sounds of the dark, dusty bar. She hears the clackety-clack of cowboy boots and the click-click high heeled shoes. She hears the swishing sound of denim and feels the coarse waistband of the cowboy's Levi's beneath her palm.

Aida dances.

And then she remembers.

Meg McNeill (9)



Neel Webb (10)

No Snow

It was a cold Christmas Eve,
But no snow blanketed the ground.
And I asked if you'd seen
A little girl in rags of dirty-brown.
She was standing right before you,
Open hands imploring you.
Were the windows of your soul closed?
For that's what I supposed
As your cold, dry hand clenched my arm
In a violent tug of alarm.
Then I realized you were tugging to show me
The radiance of the Christmas lights in the valley below me,
And it seemed I'd waited all my life to stand with you up here,
looking down
below,
But I don't know why because there wasn't any snow
And all the splendor was tossed away with the wind's powerful,
mocking blow.
And you know?
I'm still wondering if you saw me go,
My watery eyes never looking back,
My frost-bitten hands dropping my shopping sack.
I wasn't thinking of you, and that's a fact!
I ran and ran,
Growing warmer every second,
And when I saw the little girl I was seeking I dramatically beckoned.
Her eyes looked right through me,
So it seemed.
For she was just sitting on the curb hugging her legs to her chest,
Rocking to and fro,
Eyes opening and shutting.
Oh I was almost there when the pattern of her eyes missed a beat
And then I realized, as my frown became a smile, she'd gone on
search of
eternal heat.

Catherine Nading (11)

Orange Mint

The scent of these colors has gone god knows where
The shadows blend them until they are gone,
an undiscovered child in hide-and-seek.
A father's silver hair whispers lullabies to his children
and the orange October sunset.
The purple gingham that hung to the floor on mother's kitchen table
has been packed in a box, put in the attic to collect dust
With no more value than an old leather boot caked with mud,
from the first day of spring
in the deep south,
in God knows where.

Alice Orman (11)



Corinne Mynatt (11)

A Happy Childhood Memory

The little girl throws her arms out and spins.
She tilts her sanguine face
To the cloudless, periwinkle sky
And closes her eyes. The cool wind
Brushes her soft, smooth skin,
Caresses her face and puckered lips,
And lifts and whirls her celery green dress
With the satin bow.
The young girl's voice rings
With innocent laughter
As her feet crunch the leaves beneath.
Breathlessly she falls
To the yellow and brown
Padded earth, landing in a tumult.
As she looks up
Her world spins around and around,
Jolting her senses.
She lifts her small frame from the
ground to be once again filled
With the bliss of her dizziness.

Erin Russell (11)



Laura Callaway (10)

For Molly

The tall, strong, beautiful, women,
Stand like peacocks on their
podiums.

Muscles define their otherwise
birch tree bodies.

In their eyes, work, years of work
just to be,
Right where they are now.

The color, however, is faced by
time,
Or by unaccomplished dreams,
Just enough so I can see,
Right,
Through them.

A yell pierces the thick air,
The confidence fades from their
hard faces,
Their eyes are now frightened like
helpless deer,
And it seems... like... time... has...
Stopped.

They shoot out into the serene
water,
Like 6 am toast.
Energy fills the room,
And all that is heard is the con-
stant
and, punishing, slaps on the
surface.

...nce.
...et,
Gasping for air,
As to scream,
But there is silence.

Each arm and leg,

And even muscle has to work
together now,
For one reason,
One never-ending reason.

The graceful, dark, brilliant
woman,
Is released from the water like
an angel,
From heaven.
Slowly traveling water drops,
Slide down her intense curves.

Every eye in the entire room,
The entire world,
Is on her,
As it,
Has always been.

She basks in her silent glory,
And then,
She is gone.
She has disappeared,
And the only remembrance
that lives,

Are the limp,
Shy,
Water drops,
That made the journey,
That made her.

Mary Cresap Szarwark (11)

Reflection

My mirror is my enemy,
 A plain face staring back
 Taunts my pride.
 Two eyes searching for beauty
 That does not exist.
 One soul searching for the meaning
 In going on.
 Longing to see before me
 A perfect image,
 Wishing the picture could be different,
 Knowing all the while it cannot.
 One face staring and searching,
 Hopelessly waiting for an answer
 That does not come,
 Nor will it ever,
 Until two eyes can learn to stare
 Past the mirror.

Elizabeth Ramsey (11)



Leah High (11)

Catch

In you I have changed
 but without you I am drifting;
 I still hold your words in my hands
 but they are faded
 into flawless poetry—
 memories rubbed smooth in my mind.

I wish they left me
 more than unsatisfied,
 but I am not so easily appeased.

you caught me
 falling
 and slowly leveled
 my nature
 to the best of your ability;
 so maybe we were both a little crazy,
 but I always liked the way you wore my heart
 in a simple half-smile.

catch me now,
 I just can't settle for apathetic me;
 I miss your touch,
 though at times I thought
 I'd rather settle for less—
 waiting lonely on an open line.
 I exist in sleepless nights like these,
 as my guitar lays in open arms
 and I play the songs I never played for you.

I hear that silence brings atrophy
 his time
 not a feeling
 maybe it's a good sign
 as my strings aren't eminently out of tune;
 yet reality sings its sweet notes sour,
 when all I really wanted to say
 is I miss you.

Catherine Carroll (11)

A Sense of Taste

I am driving down the two lane road. It is mid-day but it is already dark with the winter's persistent gloom. My father sits beside me in the passenger's seat staring straight ahead. We are doing our weekly chores--paying his bills, seeing his doctor, and I know that sooner or later we will have to stop for lunch or he will forget to eat for the rest of the day. He is quiet as usual. I glance over at him as I brake for a stop light. The gray of this Seattle day makes him look older than his 80 years. His hair seems thin and his color sallow and I see more wrinkles around his mouth and eyes. I have been taking care of him since mama died 15 years ago. It seems to me like this day is like all the others of my life. I feel like I am being held under water and although I struggle to get to the surface to breath, it is all in vain. I have lived without breathing for 15 years.

As the light changes, I see an old friend from high school in the oncoming lane. I wonder if she sees me and hold up my hand to say hi, but she passes and I am not noticed. Dad has an appointment at the doctor's very soon, and I think that we might be early. I dread sitting in those office waiting rooms where so many sick people have touched everything around me. I see Dad from the corner of my eye. He just sits there looking at his hands or out of the window.

"How are you doing, Dad? "

"Oh, I guess I'm fine."

"Are you hungry yet?"

"No."

That is the sum of most of our conversations and he is the only person I really talk to anymore.

Dad is so weak and leans on my arm the whole way up the dark concrete ramp. We enter the doctor's office. The smells attack me from every corner of the room and no matter where I move or how I try to cover myself up and stay away from the sterile yet rank odors, they engulf and smother me. I am trapped in a small invisible space where nothing touches me and I do not touch anything. The doctor's office has gray walls with big, red, plush chairs. The room is full of serious people, overcoats, lamps and magazines. The chair in the very back in the corner looks the most welcoming and I settle Dad into it. Pulling one up beside him, I notice a few coloring books on the floor. Dad used to help me color when I was so small. How long ago that seems now. I never realized that my life has drifted by like a leaf floating on a pond. There has never been a current or a swell of water to alter my course or head me back in the right direction. Slowly but surely, my life has floated away, into the depths

beyond comprehension and unknowable vastness, where all the wasted time is collected. We wait.

"Mr. Stanburg, Mr. Stanburg," calls the receptionist at the front desk. She has a bored look in her eyes that screams for help.

"Dad, come on now. It's your turn." He shudders awake from a catnap, and stares blankly at the wall. It is amazing how cold his hands are. Death must be so cold.

I hold on to his shoulders to slowly peel him out of the chair, and he humps over when he finally stands. He isn't going anywhere without my help. I slip my arm around his slim waist and holding a fragile arm over my right shoulder I walk him over to the door. The assistant nurse is entirely white, even her hair and skin. She says to me:

"I'll take over from here." It has been so long since anyone said that to me. I smile at her.

I greet Dad when he comes back out and help him back into the car again. It is drizzling now and the clouds are getting thicker. I think I can hear thunder in the distance. I start the engine and we pull out of the parking lot and onto the road again. An enormous truck thunders by my little car. With just a small movement of my wrist I move the car over a little more to the side of the lane just in case. With just that minute gesture of my hand I can control this automobile so perfectly and precisely. It is an eerie feeling. With any whim I have, I can control where and how it ventures. I could turn the wheel to the left right this very moment and crash into that tree over there head first. The wheel has so much power behind it. I can feel it vibrating, with so much energy behind every vibration that I wonder if I really do have power over it. It may have more control over where I go than I do. I stroke the worn, smooth surface of the steering wheel. It seems to have power over me. Where will it go? It is a way to get me somewhere that I do not want to go.

We will have to wait until later to go by the post office, I think to myself, because Dad will need to eat soon and I'm hungry also.

"Are you hungry Dad? It's almost noon."

"Yes, I really am. Where are we going?"

"Where would you like to go?" I ask.

"What is that place your mother and I used to go to all the time?"

A shadow crossed his face.

"I don't know what place you are talking about. Where is it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I guess we will just have to find someplace else then."

I pull the car off of the two lane road onto yet another one. Driving down the shadowy street at this time of day makes everything seem so much clearer. We pass a few fast food chains and also a Bar-B-Que restaurant with a flashing pink neon sign with a cowgirl outfit on it. It has fancy curtains and valet parking. Maybe things are just strange and not understandable to begin with. A few streets down is a little market with a single gas pump outside. A simple painted sign declares with strong, bold letters: Nirvana's. The car is almost out of fuel, so I pull onto the cracked concrete slab where the pump is. A man and woman come out of the market singing a country music song loud enough for me to hear it. I suppose this place is as good as any so I decide to stop here for lunch.

With Dad leaning on my shoulder we walk up to the door and I open it. A wall of a scent which I can't quite identify hits me. It is an old smell like linoleum floors. A television which is pre-set to an afternoon prayer station is flickering in the background. The blue and white linoleum floors have splotches here and there of meals served decades ago. Coca-Cola signs on the wall reflect light from the small lamps hanging over the tables. A man walks by me in a cowboy hat and black, calfskin boots embroidered with turquoise thread. He gets a dingy cream colored plastic plate and takes his place in line. Now I see the line. I get two plates for Dad and I and we also join the line. Three or four ladies who are at least fifty years old stand behind the counter. Most of them are extremely fat, somehow blending in with the atmosphere around us. They pick up two slices of thin and smooth Sunbeam white bread with their bare hands and drop them on the counter. Next, they dip a knife into a bucket of pimento cheese. They slap it onto the bread, generously spreading it in hypnotizing circles. On goes the top piece and the finished sandwich is wrapped in plastic wrap and plopped down on my plate. I find a table next to a window looking out on the sleeting rain.

Rain always has a terrible way of making me feel bad. In Seattle, this is the kind of weather that we get nine months out of a year. Seems to be my luck nowadays. I fold back the plastic wrap and look at my sandwich. I have never had one of these before. I'm too tired to anticipate the taste.

Slowly I lift it out of the paper. I take a bite and look out of the window. The bite seems to dissolve in my mouth, but the flavor explodes. I close my eyes and breathe deeply. I feel as if I am getting more life-giving air than ever before. I can feel it as I breathe in my nose and it stings. It swirls into my lungs like the pixie dust in the

pictures in my Peter Pan coloring book from when I was four. I hold it in until I think that it will dissolve into my mind and thoughts and pick me up and carry me away. The room seems just a little bit brighter. I savor every bite. When I take the last bite I crumple the wrapping and put it in my purse. An overweight lady with a hair net beckons me to the cashier's table. While opening my purse to pay her four dollars and fifty-one cents, she smiles at me. I smile back, and Dad and I head out the door. As we are walking back to the car I say:

"Dad, that is the best sandwich I've ever had."

I swear I see the sun peeking out from behind that cloud in the distance. Or maybe not.

Jenny Paris (10)



Alice Orman (11)

Hallmarks

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